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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
19 July 1965

50X1

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50X1

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19 July 1965

HIGHLIGHTS

For the first time since late May government convoys on 18 July successfully transited the 100-mile stretch from the port of Qui Nhon to the isolated II Corps headquarters at Pleiku city without incident. A Communist force of undetermined strength launched a sporadic mortar and small arms attack on 18 July against positions of the US 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: An unknown number of Viet Cong launched a sporadic mortar and small arms attack last night against positions of the 2nd Brigade, 1st US Infantry Division, south-east of Bien Hoa Airfield (Paras. 1-2). ARVN forces are continuing road clearing operations along strategic lateral Route 19, inland from the supply port of Qui Nhon to II Corps headquarters at Pleiku (Paras. 3-4). Final results of a large-scale ARVN road-clearing operation conducted in Quang Nam Province during 15-16 July indicate heavy losses were sustained by both sides (Para. 5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: A group of about 50 men, including certain well-placed military and civilian officials, is reported to be organizing for a take-over of the government in Saigon after about a year (Paras. 1-3).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: US air strikes on 19 July were flown against the Vinh Son army barracks, the Ben Thuy port facility and the Ban Xom Lom barracks (Paras. 1-2).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: Nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Nothing of significance to report.

VI. Other Major Developments: Andre Malraux, French Minister of state for cultural affairs, is on his way to Peiping for talks with Chinese Communist leaders (Para. 1).

50X1

SOUTH VIETNAM



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A Communist force of undetermined strength launched a sporadic mortar and small arms attack last night against positions of the 2d Brigade, 1st US Infantry Division, approximately seven miles southeast of Bien Hoa Airfield. The assault, launched under the cover of a driving rain storm, lasted for 1 1/2 hours and resulted in US casualties of three killed and ten wounded. Brigade artillery was unable to respond against enemy positions because of the presence of civilians in the area. However, helicopter strikes were made after daybreak.

2. When the Viet Cong broke contact early today, a sweep of the area was initiated by elements of the 2d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade. Results of the ground probe indicate that one Viet Cong body was found and that an estimated 50 Viet Cong killed were carried away. According to late reports, the area has been secured.

3. ARVN forces are continuing road clearing operations along strategic lateral Route 19 in Binh Dinh and Pleiku provinces. Two large government convoys successfully transited the 100-mile stretch from the port of Qui Nhon to the isolated II Corps headquarters at Pleiku city yesterday for the first time since late May without incident. The first convoy delivered 304 tons of munitions and jet fuel, while the second included 128 truckloads of assorted supplies.

4. In a follow-up survey of the B-52 mission strike zone in the Mang Yang Pass area near the Binh Dinh - Pleiku border, ARVN troops were severely hampered by extremely heavy undergrowth. Penetration was limited to 550 yards. Some bomb craters and hastily constructed field positions were observed during the cursory search which has been terminated.

19 July 1965

I-I

50X1

5. In Quang Nam Province, final results of a road-clearing operation conducted by battalion-strength elements of the 2nd ARVN Division during 15-16 July indicate heavy losses were sustained by both sides. The action, details of which were erroneously carried in earlier press reports, (see 16 July Situation Report, Page I-1, Para. 1), resulted in losses to the Viet Cong of 174 killed, 145 suspects detained, 29 weapons captured, and a quantity of ammunition, explosives, and miscellaneous equipment seized. Government forces sustained losses of 67 killed, 39 wounded, 96 weapons captured, and one helicopter destroyed.

6. MACV's military report for 17 July shows 40 Communist - initiated incidents, six of which occurred during the 24-hour reporting period. There were no major new actions, as small-scale terrorism, mortar and small arms harassing fire actions, mine detonations, and communications sabotage continued to characterize the bulk of hostile activity reported.

7. Combat air operations were flown by American and Vietnamese aircraft against suspected Viet Cong troop encampments and base areas throughout South Vietnam on 17 July, with pilots reporting an estimated 150 guerrillas killed, 163 structures destroyed, and 109 damaged. The most productive air strikes of the day were targeted against enemy positions in the Mekong Delta provinces of Phong Dinh, Chuong Thien, and An Xuyen, where friendly aircraft reportedly killed 118 Viet Cong, destroyed 93 structures, and damaged 67 in a series of bombing and strafing missions.

19 July 1965

I-2

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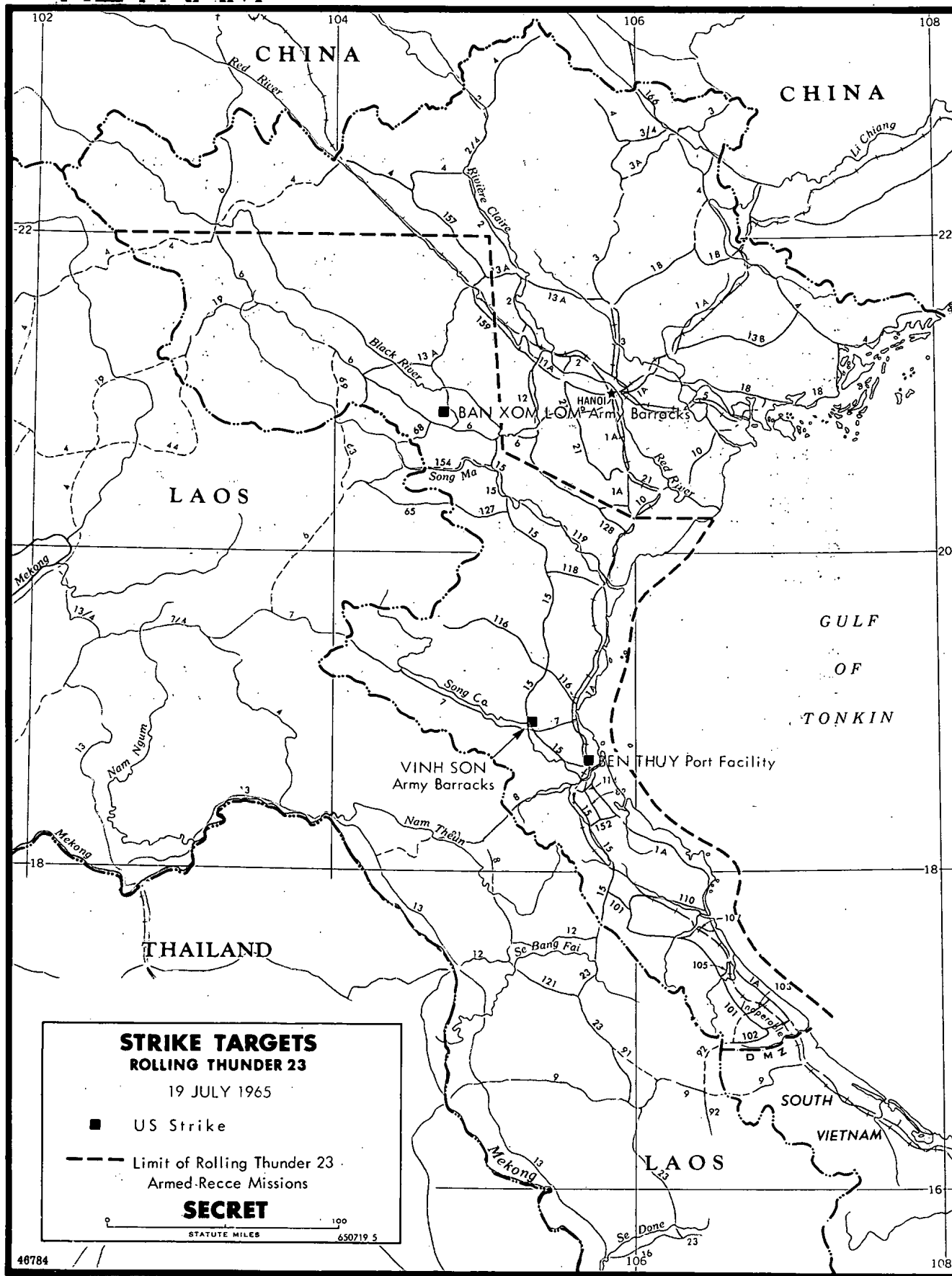
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50X1

NORTH VIETNAM



III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. Three primary strikes were flown against targets in North Vietnam on 19 July. Results from two have been received.

2. USAF F-105s struck the Vinh Son army barracks destroying fifteen buildings and damaging seven. USN aircraft hit the Ben Thuy port facility reporting nine buildings destroyed. The Ban Xom Lom barracks were also hit by USN aircraft, but no reports have thus far been received.

3. USN aircraft were scheduled to conduct twenty armed reconnaissance missions. Two of these were unsuccessful due to heavy fog in the target areas. The others have not been reported. Prereconnaissance strikes conducted against the Cap Mui Ron and Vinh Son radar sites were moderately successful.

4. The pilot and crewman of the USN aircraft lost over the Ham Rong port facility on 18 July have been declared missing and search-and-rescue operations canceled. North Vietnamese broadcasts indicate that the two men were captured.

19 July 1965

III-1

50X1

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. Nothing of significance to report

19 July 1965

IV-1

50X1

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Nothing of significance to report.

19 July 1965

V-1

50X1

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VI. OTHER MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

1. Andre Malraux, French minister of state for cultural affairs, passed through Hong Kong en route to Peiping on 19 July. [REDACTED]

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50X1

[REDACTED] he will talk with Chinese Communist leaders but have given no indication of the nature of the discussions. Malraux is close to De Gaulle and has considerable standing as a French political leader. In the past he has been used to take political soundings abroad and it is possible the Vietnam situation will be among the political issues that may come up.

2. Peiping will undoubtedly attempt to exploit Malraux's presence and his international reputation as an authority on China. It is also possible that they will repeat--as they have other foreign visitors--warnings designed to deter the US from further escalation.

19 July 1965

VI-1

50X1

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